

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS urges Greek authorities to repeal Sanitary Decree

GENEVA, 31 July 2013—The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) expresses deep concern over the reintroduction of a Sanitary Decree in Greece that could lead to infringements of human rights and prevent people from accessing HIV services.

There is no evidence that punitive approaches—particularly those that single out members of key populations—are effective in responding to HIV. On the contrary, such measures deter people most affected by HIV from accessing lifesaving HIV prevention and care services.

Initially introduced in April 2012, the Sanitary Decree allows for “specific control” and “screening” measures against sex workers, migrants and people who use drugs. Shortly after the Decree was introduced a number of sex workers were arrested, detained, tested for HIV, prosecuted and their photographs published.

The Sanitary Decree was repealed in April 2013; however, the government reintroduced the Decree in June this year. UNAIDS is very concerned that the reintroduction of this legislation, with the same provisions, could serve to justify actions that violate human rights.

UNAIDS urges the Greek authorities to repeal the Sanitary Decree and initiate dialogue with health experts, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders to develop appropriate evidence-informed and rights-based public health regulations. All people—including sex workers and their clients, people who use drugs, migrants and asylum-seekers—should have access to voluntary and confidential HIV services and be protected against discrimination.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.